

# What is AI Reading?

December 2025



# Executive Summary

- **Journalism and earned media continue to be important drivers:** The majority of links cited by AI are non-paid coverage with about **25%** of citations coming from journalistic sources.
- **AI prefers sources published in the last year:** More than half of all citations observed were published in the last **12 months**. The highest citation rate occurs within **seven days** of publication.
- **Press release citations have increased 5x since July:** Press releases now account for **1%** of citations, up from **0.2%** in July.
- **Outlet authority matters for GEO:** AI models take into an account the authority of a source. This can be in a broad sense, like high domain authority sites like Reuters. Or in a more targeted way, like citing industry-specific sources for industry-specific queries.
- **Models regularly adjust their citation practices:** Between July and December 2025, all models tested made substantial changes to their citation practices. For example, press release citations became more common, management consulting citations decreased, and YouTube became dominant in Gemini responses.

# Methodology

## We analyzed 1,000,000+ links from AI responses

This study explores how modern generative AI systems cite sources in response to realistic user prompts. Our objective was to quantify and characterize the nature of AI-generated citations across different use cases and vendor models. This includes their frequency, source types, and the prominence of earned and owned media. To accomplish this, we constructed a large, diverse prompt set and executed it across several web-enabled language models, followed by systematic analysis of the responses and the cited links. The prompts span a variety of industries and subject matter. Sometimes prompts specifically mention companies by name, sometimes they do not.

Gemini, Perplexity, Claude and ChatGPT were used to execute the queries, during between July and December 2025.

Generative AI systems are rapidly evolving and inherently opaque. The behaviors observed in this study may shift as models are updated or retrained.

We assigned cited links into categories as follows:

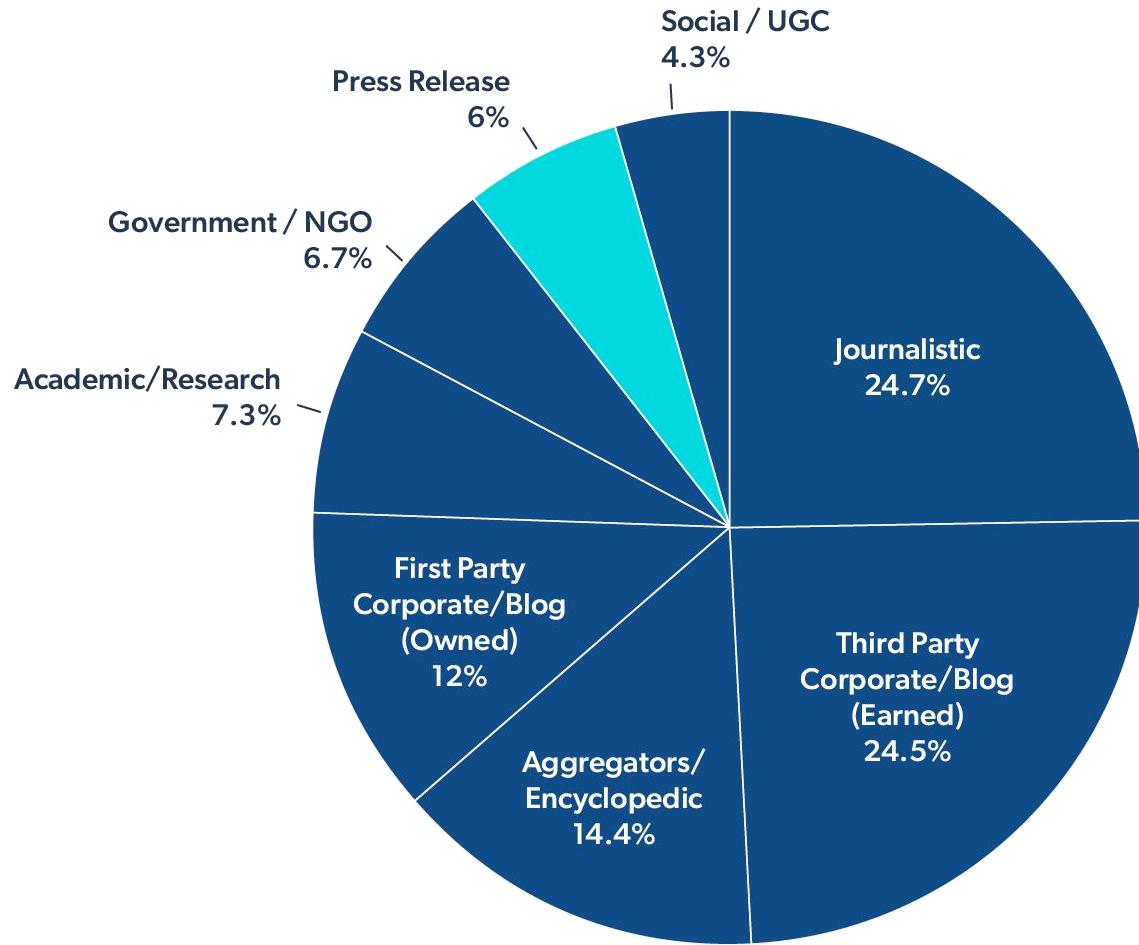
- **Journalistic:** News sites, and other journalistic coverage
- **Third Party Corporate/Blog (Earned):** Third party corporate blogs and content **not** owned by a company/product targeted in the query
- **First Party Party Corporate/Blog (Owned):** Corporate Content created by a company/product targeted in the query
- **Press Release:** Press release published on any site
- **Academic/Research:** Scientific journals, arXiv, patents, research papers
- **Government/NGO:** .gov sites, public agencies, non-profit organizations
- **Social/UGC:** Social platforms (e.g., LinkedIn, Reddit) and other sources of user-generated content
- **Aggregators/Encyclopedic:** Sites like Wikipedia, Visual Capitalist and Britannica.com

**Which types of media  
does AI cite?**

## Non-paid media accounts for about 94% of links cited by AI

This figure is largely unchanged compared to the study in July 2025 when non-paid media accounted for 95% of citations.

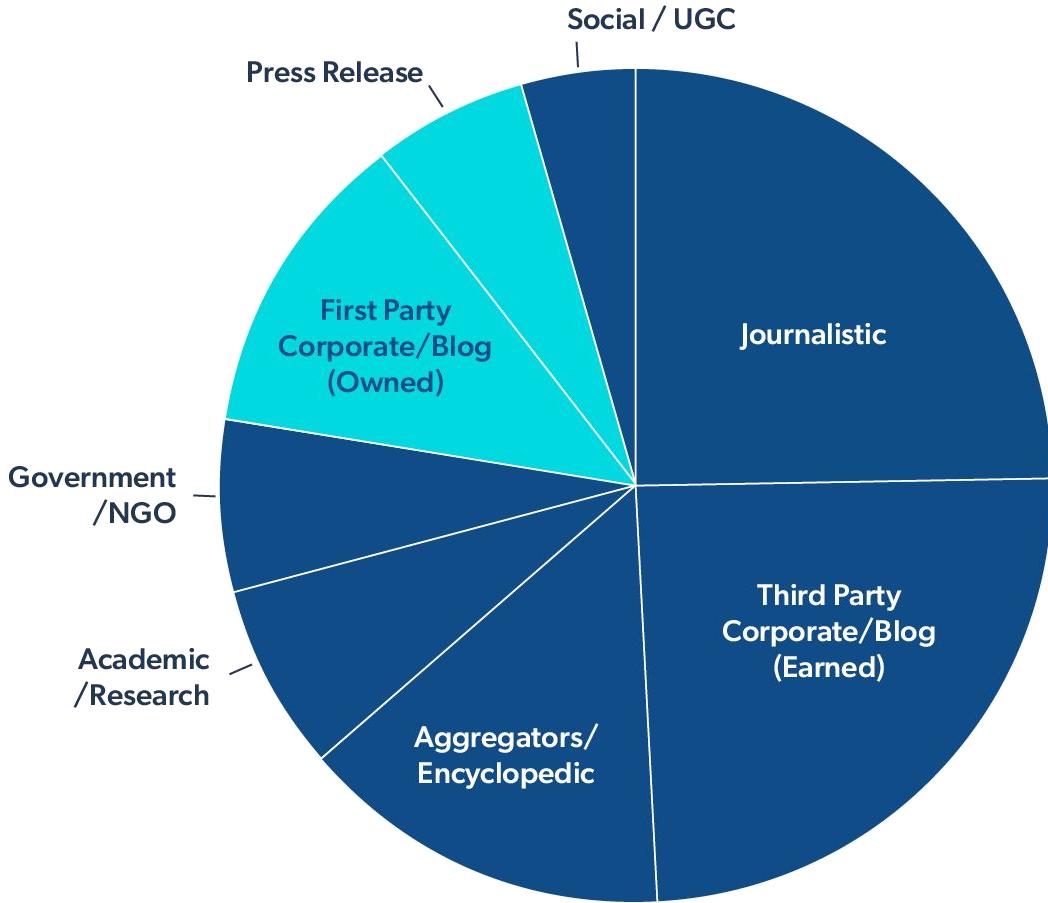
During this time, one of the biggest changes is an increase in the amount of press releases being cited.



## 82% of links cited come from earned media

This figure was about **89%** in July and the decline can be attributed to a few adjustments. Namely the reliance on **aggregator/encyclopedic** sources decreased during this period as OpenAI lowered their reliance on Wikipedia.

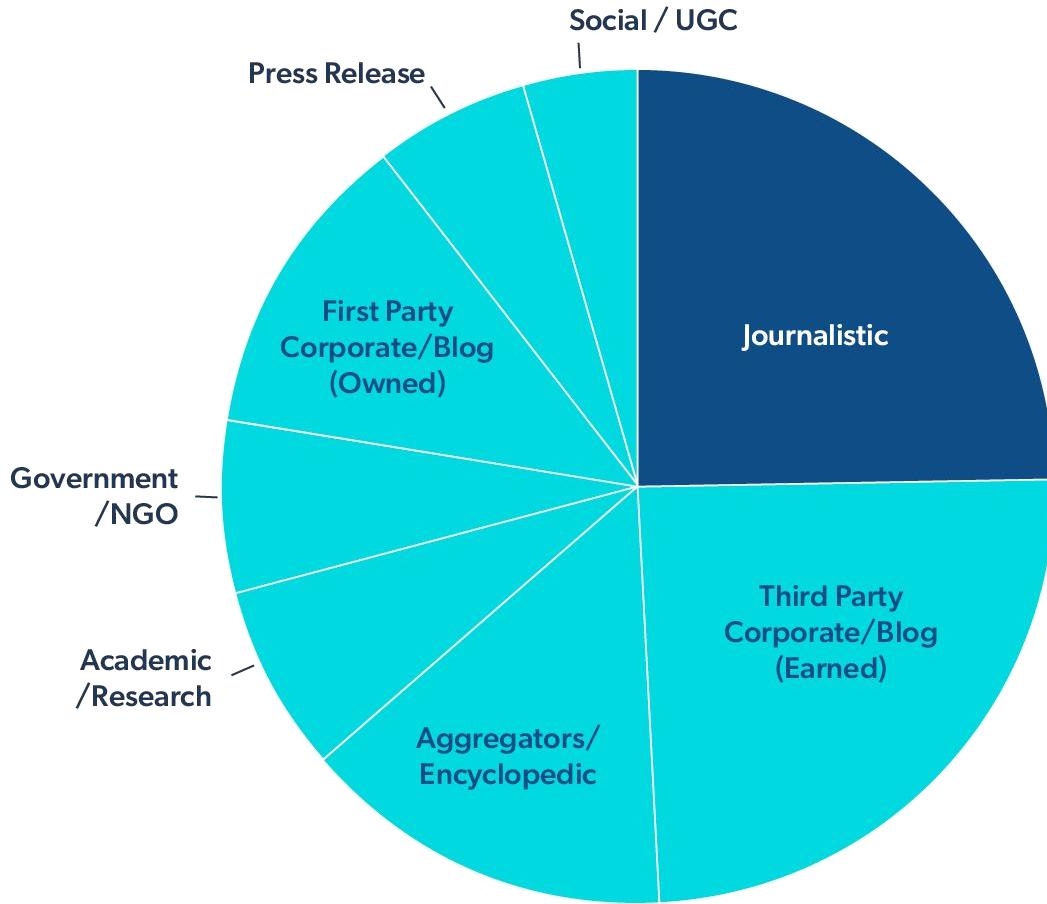
The **third party corporate/blog** citations also decreased as models relied less on content from management consulting firms.



## About a quarter of links cited by AI are journalistic

Just under **25%** of all links cited come from journalistic sources, which underscores the continued reliance of AI models on traditional media sources.

While this figure did decrease about **2%** since July, journalism's place in the mix of citations remains incredibly strong. Despite small variations, journalism reliably accounts for **20–30%** of citations at any given time.



**What determines if  
content gets cited?**

# Models pull from a diverse range of high authority outlets

The top cited outlets shifted for each of the models since the July 2025 study. A few are familiar including Reuters, Yahoo Finance and others.

Across models, there is very little overlap. Only CNBC and Bankrate are cited often by more than one model.

## Top media outlets cited

### Claude

|                            |            |               |
|----------------------------|------------|---------------|
| U.S. News and World Report | Nature     | Yahoo Finance |
| CNBC                       | NerdWallet | Bankrate      |

### ChatGPT

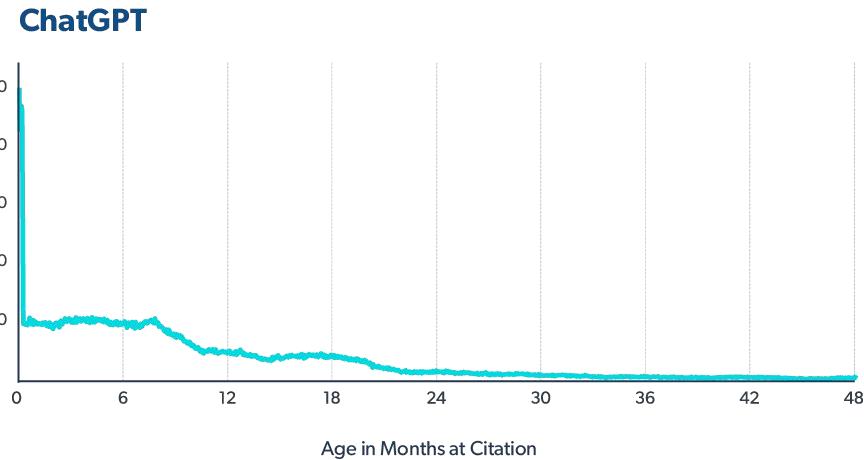
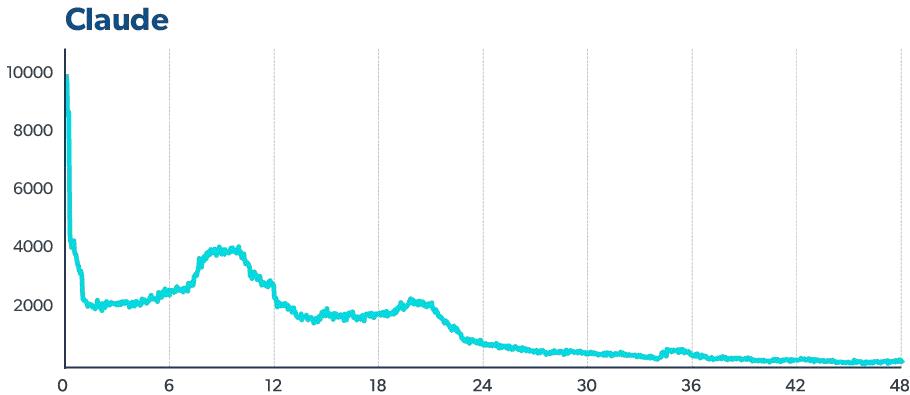
|                 |           |              |
|-----------------|-----------|--------------|
| Reuters         | The Verge | The Guardian |
| Financial Times | CNBC      | Axios        |

### Gemini

|        |              |             |
|--------|--------------|-------------|
| Forbes | Investopedia | NerdWallet  |
| Cnet   | Bankrate     | PC Magazine |

# Half of all citations are published in the last 11 months

AI models prefer to pull from fresh sources for their citations. The first **50%** of citations are for articles published in the last 11 months. The remaining **50%** is in the long tail cover an additional **three years**.



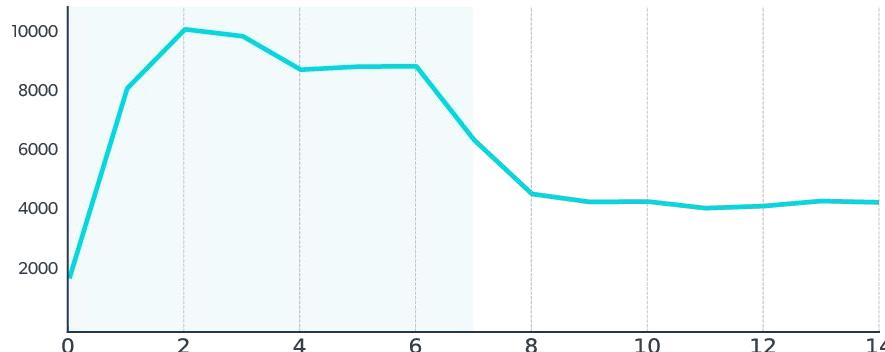
## The first seven days has the highest citation rate

For both Claude and ChatGPT, around **4%** of all citations are from within the last week, which makes this the highest concentration of citations of any time period.

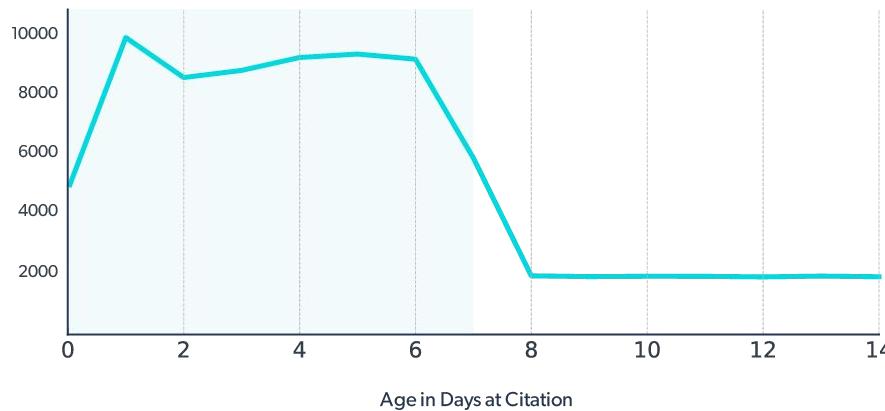
To put this in context, the figure increases to about **5%** for stories published in the last two weeks, and **8%** in the last month.

When we examine data from the end of November 2025, there is some evidence the pattern may be shifting to become less pronounced.

**Claude**



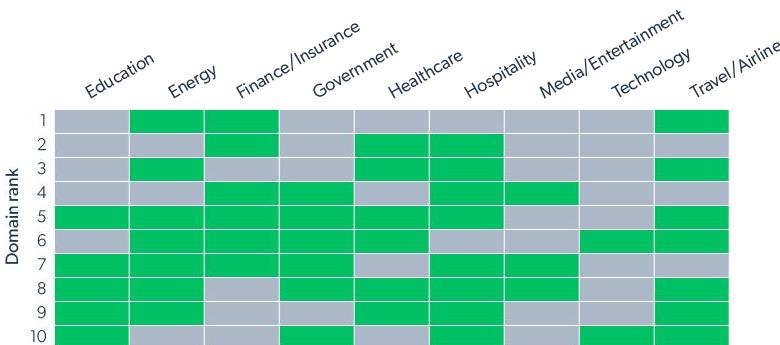
**ChatGPT**



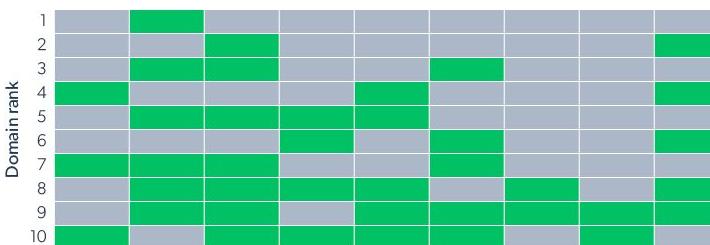
# Niche outlets are still important for industry-specific queries

Within each industry, AI models tend to cite unique outlets. Compared to our analysis of data from July, most industries still have a healthy mix of unique outlets with only one big exception. Queries about technology cite fewer unique outlets compared to data from July.

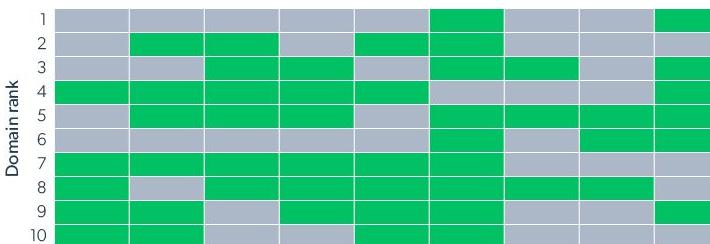
**Claude**



**Gemini**



**ChatGPT**



● Sources in green represent domains that are in the “top 10” uniquely in one industry.

● Sources in gray represent outlets that are in the “top 10” cited across other industries.

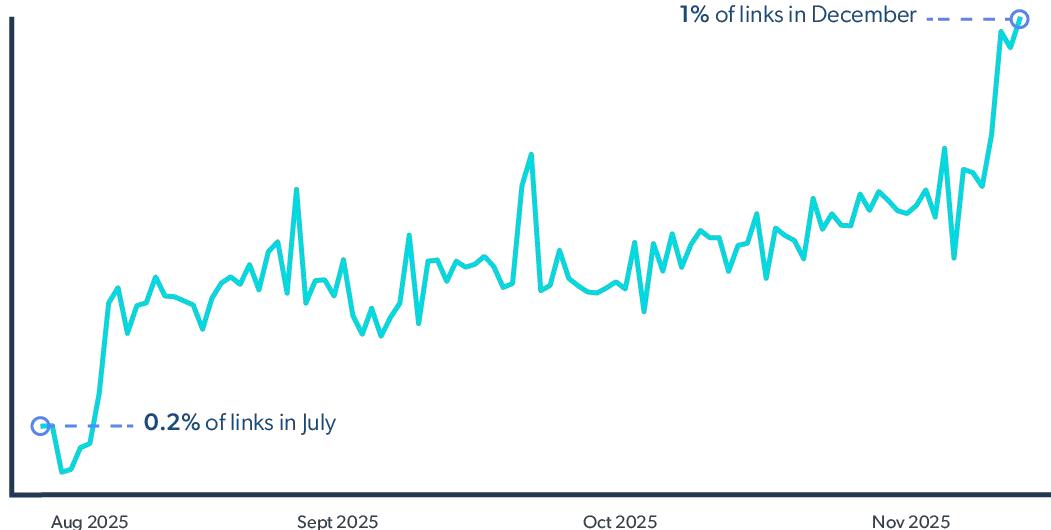
# Insights & trends

# Press release citations have increased 5x since July

Press releases overall have increased from **1.2%** to about **6%** from July to December.

And specifically citations directly to [prnewswire.com](https://prnewswire.com), [businesswire.com](https://businesswire.com), [globnewswire.com](https://globnewswire.com) have increased from **0.2%** of all citations in July up to **1%** in December.

Citations directly to [prnewswire.com](https://prnewswire.com), [businesswire.com](https://businesswire.com), [globnewswire.com](https://globnewswire.com)



# Press release structure matters

Cited press releases have about

**2x as many**

**statistics** in them on average compared to non-cited

Cited press releases have about

**30% more**

**action verbs** in them on average compared to non-cited

Cited press releases have about

**2.5x as many**

**bullet points** in them on average compared to non-cited

Cited press releases tend to mention

**more unique  
companies/products**

in them on average compared to non-cited

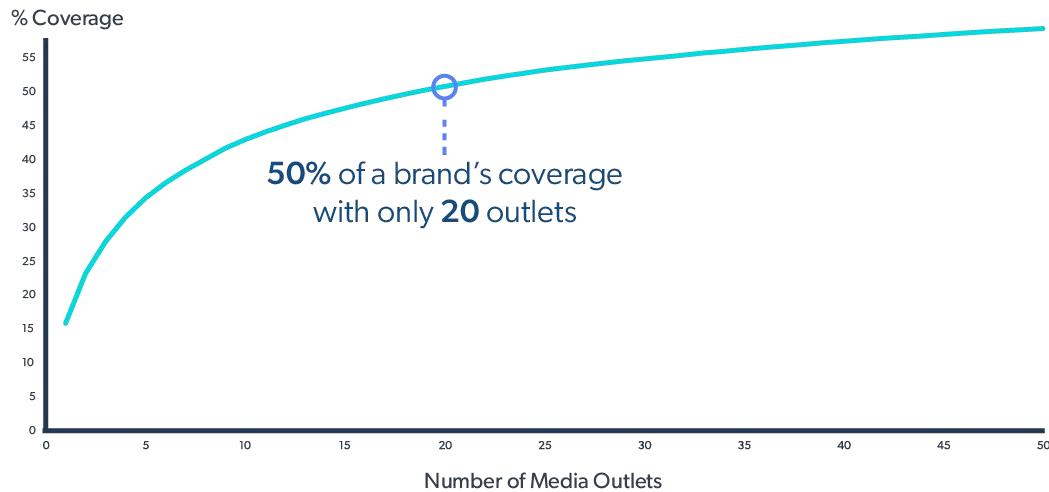
Cited press releases have about a

**30% higher**

**rate of objective sentences** in them on average compared to non-cited

## Most AI citations for a given brand come from only 20 outlets

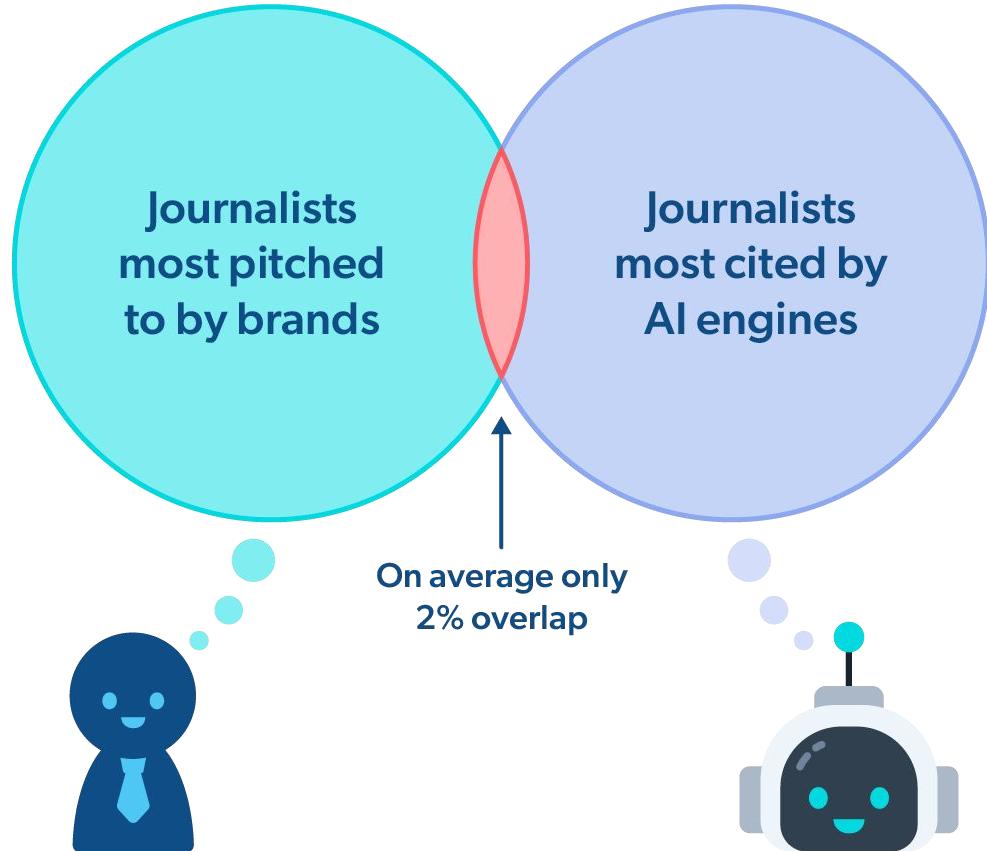
For PR pros working on their brand's GEO, the majority of work can be accomplished by targeting only 20 outlets. The catch is that there isn't a magic list of outlets for everyone. Each brand has its own mix of outlets driving their citations.



## The journalists AI relies on aren't the ones PR pros pitch

When we compare the most pitched journalists on Muck Rack with those most cited by AI engines for a particular brand, the overlap is only two percent, on average.

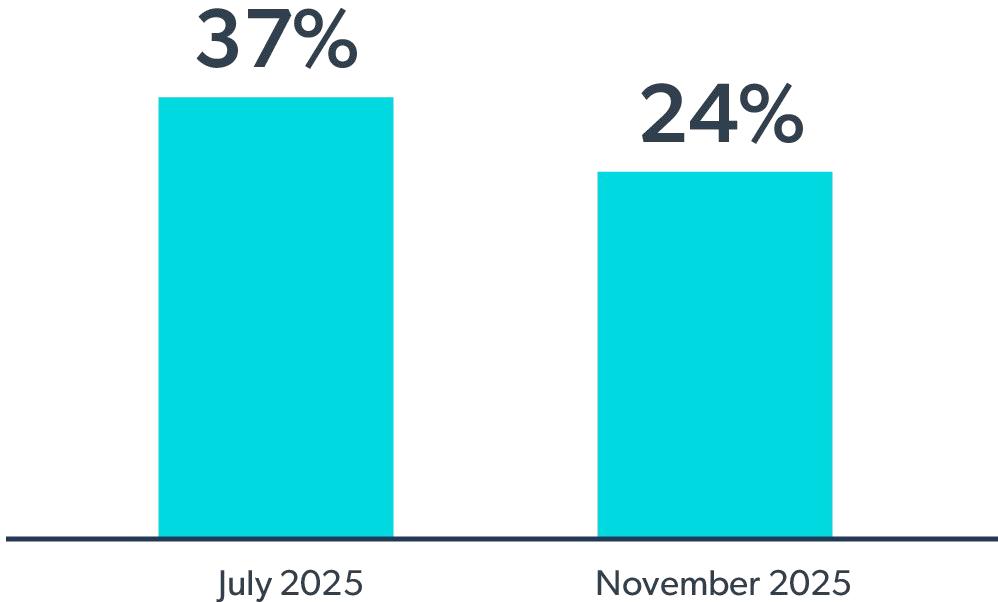
This insight means an adjustment to pitching practices could have major impact on a brand's GEO.



## Management consulting companies cited 35% less often than in July

Between July and December, the biggest change in the citation categories was a decrease of third party corporate/blog citations.

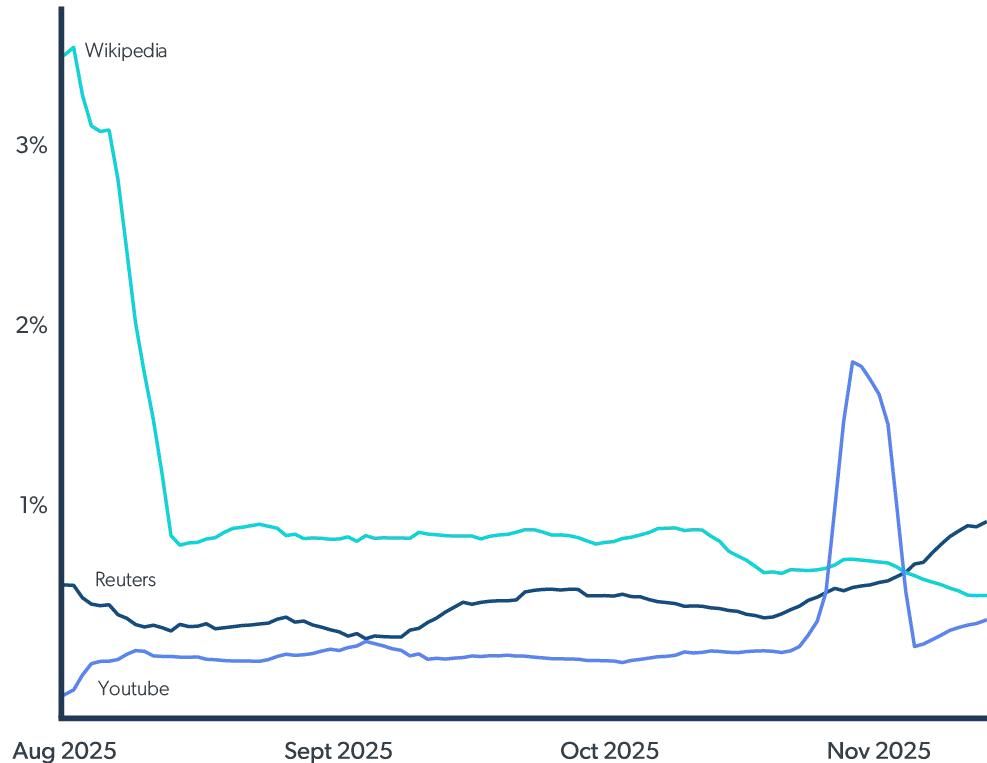
This category decreased by **35%** between July and December.



## Models' citation mix is still in flux

AI models are constantly tuning their citation mix. Sometimes these trends change over night. Sometimes it's a slow adjustment. But one thing is always true: it will change.

This chart shows citations across ChatGPT, Claude and Gemini for three major sources. In August, Wikipedia was king, until ChatGPT decreased their reliance on the site. For a few weeks in November, YouTube received a giant spike in Gemini's mix before reverting back to lower levels abruptly. Meanwhile, Reuters has slowly been growing in importance across models.



## Reddit is cited frequently but grounded with journalism

Reddit plays an important role in the overall AI answer ecosystem. It is in the top handful of cited domains for the prompts analyzed in our study

**51%** of answers which contain a Reddit citation ***also*** cite a journalistic source.



# Industry-specific trends

## EDUCATION

# Citations rely heavily on niche outlets

Across models, education queries tended to cite education-specific outlets when discussing the topic.

Compared to July, top courses now tend to come from .gov and .org sources and there has been less reliance on online courses like Coursera or Udemy.

Interestingly, Gemini relies on YouTube as their primary source on educational topics, outpacing citations to even the U.S. Department of Education.

## Top industry sources per AI provider

### Claude

pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov  
en.wikipedia.org  
sciencedirect.com  
researchgate.net  
usnews.com

### Gemini

youtube.com  
nih.gov  
researchgate.net  
ed.gov  
wikipedia.org

### ChatGPT

arxiv.org  
pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov  
reuters.com  
ed.gov  
pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov

## Top domains unique to Education



## Most cited journalists in Education

[Ashley Mowreader](#)

[Nord Anglia](#)

[Karen Sloan](#)

## ENERGY

# AI models rely on official sources for energy topics

The top sources for queries about the energy sector remain fairly stable between July and December with a slight uptick of unique domains in the top 10.

Overall, most citations come from a variety of official and government sources.

## Top industry sources per AI provider

### Claude

energy.gov  
sciencedirect.com  
iea.org  
en.wikipedia.org  
weforum.org

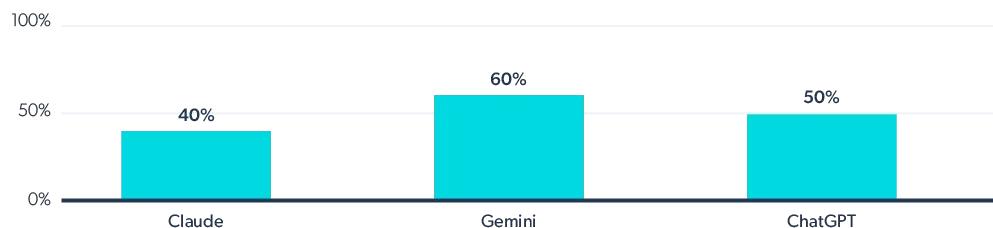
### Gemini

energy.gov  
youtube.com  
sustainability-directory.com  
wikipedia.org  
ct.gov

### ChatGPT

reuters.com  
energy.gov  
epa.gov  
iea.org  
portal.ct.gov

## Top domains unique to Energy



## Most cited journalists in Energy

[Juliana Ennes](#)

[Ryan Kennedy](#)

[Will Henshall](#)

[Gavin Maguire](#)

[Joey Lautrup](#)

[Sarah Sax](#)

[Andrew Johnson](#)

## FINANCE/INSURANCE

# Finance sources from similar outlets

For the Finance/Insurance industry, there has been a slight consolidation of source since July. Claude, which had **9 out of 10** unique sources in July is down to **5 out of 10**, while Gemini and ChatGPT grew modestly.

Bankrate and NerdWallet are found in top citations from each model.

## Top industry sources per AI provider

### Claude

bankrate.com

metinvestholding.com

en.wikipedia.org

nerdwallet.com

cnbc.com

### Gemini

youtube.com

investopedia.com

bankrate.com

forbes.com

nerdwallet.com

### ChatGPT

reuters.com

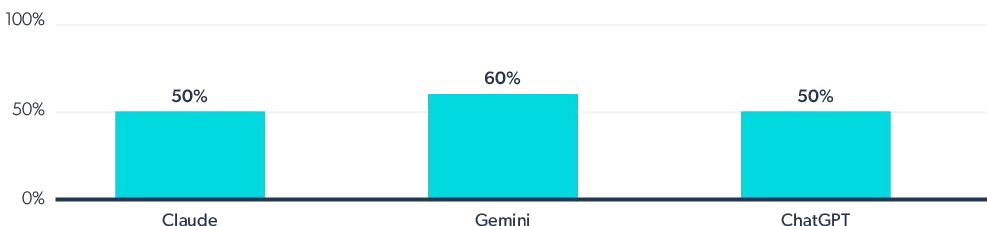
irs.gov

metinvestholding.com

nerdwallet.com

consumerfinance.gov

## Top domains unique to Finance/Insurance



## Most cited journalists in Finance/Insurance

[Elizabeth Aldrich](#)

[Brian Beers](#)

[Kathryn Pomroy](#)

[James Royal](#)

[Kate Dore](#)

[Coryanne Hicks](#)

[Kiah Treece](#)

[Akila Quinio](#)

[Erin Bendig](#)

[Jordan Tarver](#)

## GOVERNMENT

# Journalism and gov't sources are dominant

For queries about government, models tend to cite official .gov sites or major news outlets like Reuters or Bloomberg.

Overall, there are more unique sources in the top 10 sources compared to July with Gemini showing the biggest increase.

## Top industry sources per AI provider

### Claude

en.wikipedia.org  
pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov  
sciencedirect.com  
opensecrets.org  
about.bgov.com

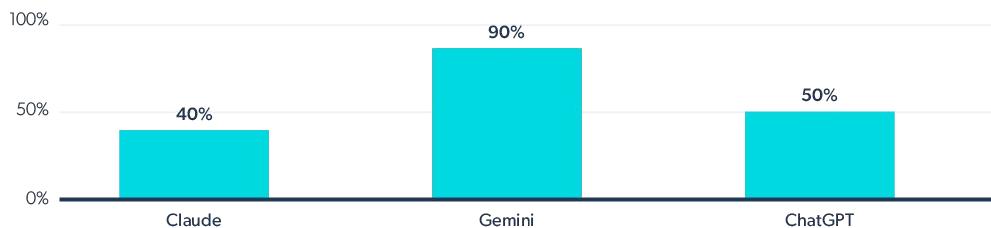
### Gemini

youtube.com  
wikipedia.org  
researchgate.net  
nih.gov  
bgov.com

### ChatGPT

reuters.com  
apnews.com  
defense.gov  
congress.gov  
fec.gov

## Top domains unique to Government



## Most cited journalists in Government

[Laurie Chen](#)

[Joe Cash](#)

[Duncan Miriri](#)

## HEALTHCARE

# Healthcare sources predominantly from official sites

The majority of top cited outlets in healthcare are from NGO or government organizations. One major exception is Gemini, which includes YouTube as a primary source.

## Top industry sources per AI provider

### Claude

pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov  
pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov  
ncbi.nlm.nih.gov  
sciencedirect.com  
fda.gov

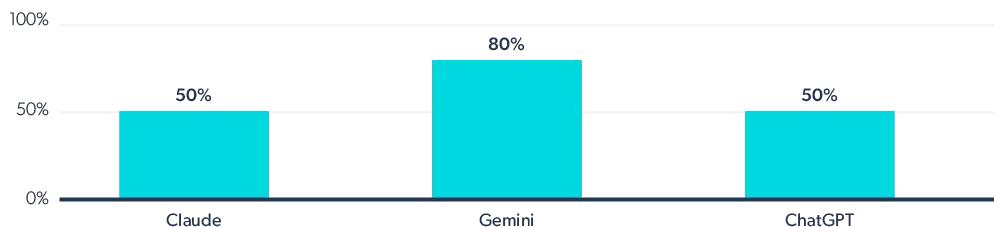
### Gemini

nih.gov  
youtube.com  
researchgate.net  
who.int  
universityhealth.com

### ChatGPT

pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov  
fda.gov  
reuters.com  
cms.gov  
arxiv.org

## Top domains unique to Healthcare



## Most cited journalists in Healthcare

[Julie Steenhuysen](#)

[Nicoletta Lanese](#)

[Michael Erman](#)

[Alice Park](#)

[Bhanvi Satija](#)

[Nancy Lapid](#)

[Deena Beasley](#)

[Patrick Wingrove](#)

[Andrew Matthius](#)

## HOSPITALITY

# Hospitality gains more unique sources

All three models began citing more unique sources for hospitality in December compared to July.

While in July there was a blend of encyclopedic and government sources, now the mix leans more heavily towards journalism and industry-specific outlets.

## Top industry sources per AI provider

### Claude

tripadvisor.com  
hostfully.com  
hostaway.com  
goodhousekeeping.com  
hospitalityinsights.ehl.edu

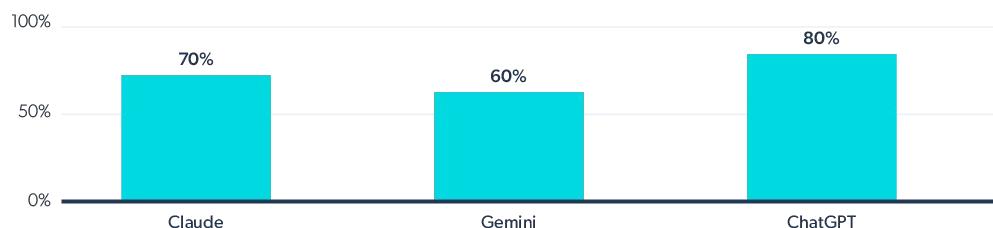
### Gemini

youtube.com  
reddit.com  
hostaway.com  
quora.com  
cnet.com

### ChatGPT

lodgify.com  
hostfully.com  
marriott.com  
prnewswire.com  
guesty.com

## Top domains unique to Hospitality



## Most cited journalists in Hospitality

[Bailey Berg](#)

[Michele Bigley](#)

## MEDIA / ENTERTAINMENT

# Unique journalism sources are most common

Citation sources for the media and entertainment industry are largely pulling from journalism sources and are unique to each model. While the top sources have changed some since July, the overall trend is the same.

## Top industry sources per AI provider

### Claude

en.wikipedia.org  
researchgate.net  
medium.com  
statista.com  
linkedin.com

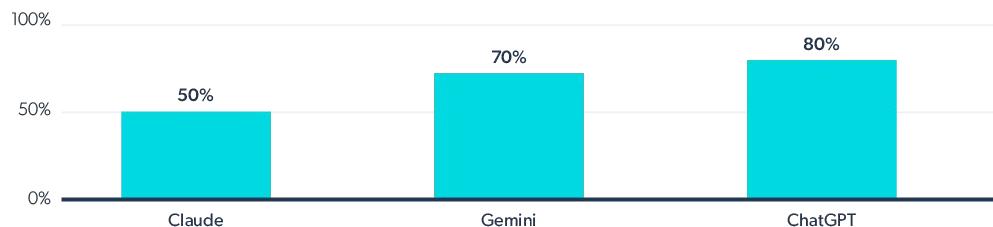
### Gemini

youtube.com  
medium.com  
wikipedia.org  
quora.com  
forbes.com

### ChatGPT

reuters.com  
theverge.com  
nielsen.com  
en.wikipedia.org  
theguardian.com

## Top domains unique to Media/Entertainment



## Most cited journalists in Media/Entertainment

[Emma Roth](#)

[Jess Weatherbed](#)

[Sara Fischer](#)

[George Winslow](#)

## TECHNOLOGY

# Models cite unique sources for tech

While there is some overlap between models, each tends to cite its own unique blend of encyclopedic, journalistic and academic sources.

Compared to July, we see the addition of encyclopedia and academic sources increase.

## Top industry sources per AI provider

### Claude

sciencedirect.com

en.wikipedia.org

medium.com

researchgate.net

linkedin.com

### Gemini

youtube.com

medium.com

forbes.com

reddit.com

researchgate.net

### ChatGPT

reuters.com

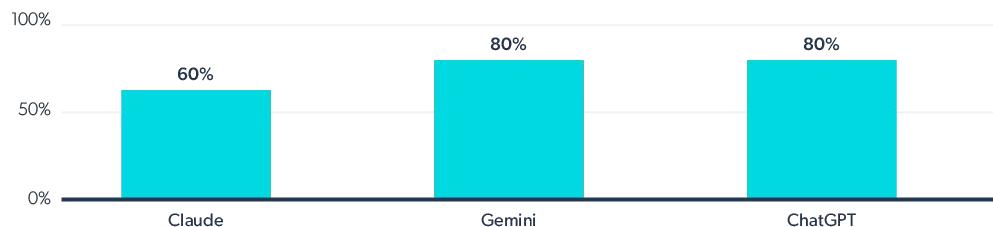
arxiv.org

prnewswire.com

theverge.com

cloud.google.com

## Top domains unique to Technology



## Most cited journalists in Technology

[Emma Roth](#)

[Jess Weatherbed](#)

[Andrew Liszewski](#)

[Abner Li](#)

[Anton Shilov](#)

[Jennifer Pattison Tuohy](#)

## TRAVEL/AIRLINE

# Social sources join the mix for travel

In addition to the governmental sources, some models like Gemini have added in social sources like Reddit and YouTube for travel related queries.

## Top industry sources per AI provider

### Claude

tn.gov  
tripadvisor.com  
travelandtourworld.com  
en.wikipedia.org  
transportation.gov

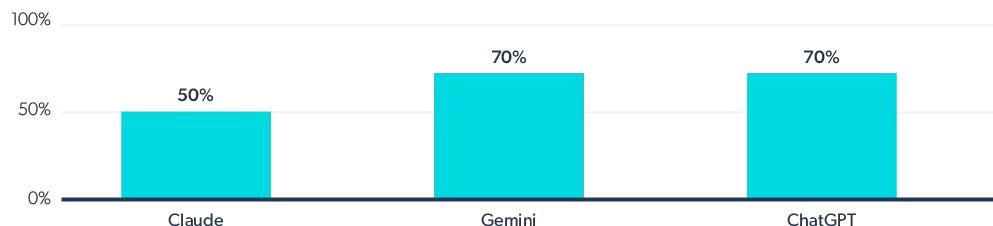
### Gemini

youtube.com  
travelandtourworld.com  
quora.com  
tnvacation.com  
reddit.com

### ChatGPT

nps.gov  
reuters.com  
tn.gov  
transportation.gov  
axios.com

## Top domains unique to Travel/Airline



## Most cited journalists in Travel/Airline

[Gwyn Topham](#)

[Stacey Leasca](#)

# Appendix

# Citations fundamentally alter AI responses

Enabling citations doesn't just add sources, it changes the response itself.

This demonstrates that citations meaningfully shape what AI says.

## Prompt

What's an example of the worst MLB baseball team you can think of

## Disabling Citations



"The 1962 New York Mets currently hold the record for the worst single-season record in MLB history. They finished their debut season with a record of 40 wins and 120 losses."

## Enabling Citations



"**2024 Chicago White Sox:** In the modern era, the 2024 White Sox set a new record for futility by finishing the season with a 41-121 record (.253 winning percentage), surpassing the previous modern-era record of 120 losses held by the 1962 New York Mets. [cbssports.com](http://cbssports.com)"

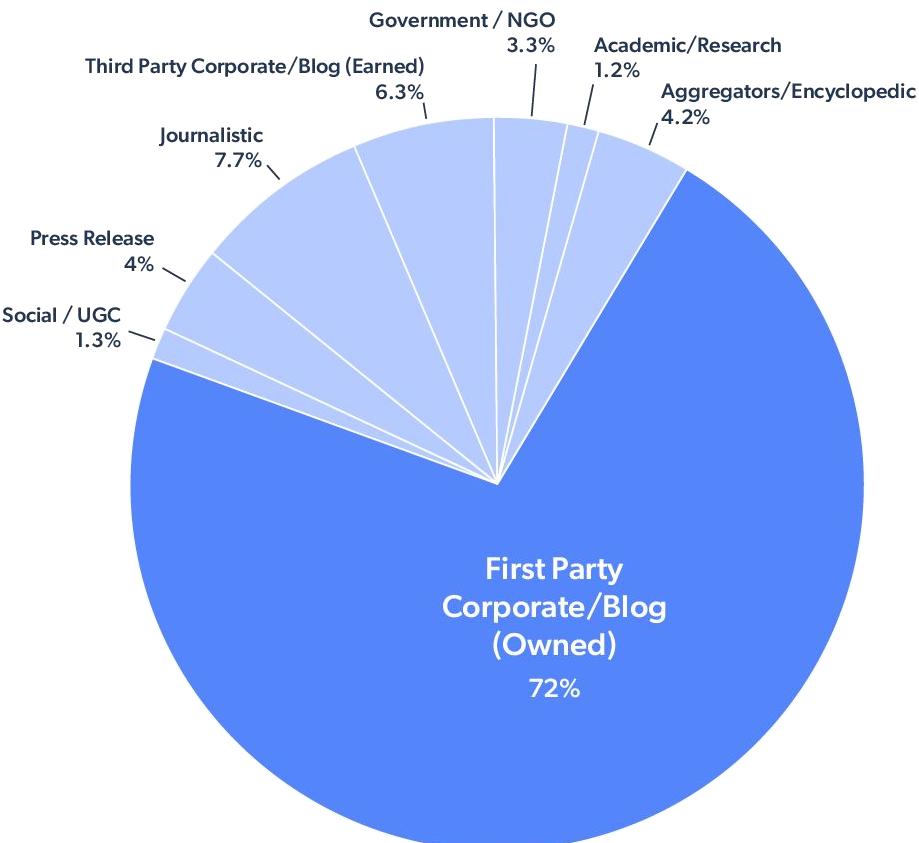
## Owned is an important channel, but only for certain types of questions

AI visibility reflects how often a brand surfaces when people ask LLMs for guidance. For discovery prompts such as “What kind of coffee maker should I buy,” earned media drives the outcome because AI tends to rely on broad, reputable coverage.

For fact-finding questions such as “What’s the warranty like for Keurig products,” AI pulls from the most authoritative source, which is usually the brand’s owned channels.

Owned matters most for specific fact finding queries, but earned drives discovery.

Citations from brand-specific fact-finding queries



# Sample prompts

## A random selection of prompts from our study for illustrative purposes

How does the fit of Saucony shoes differ from Brooks running shoes? Is Jiffy Lube worth the cost for regular maintenance, or should I just go to a local mechanic? What are the latest innovations from Harbour Energy in terms of reducing environmental impact in oil and gas production? What are the pros and cons of using Babbel over language learning apps like Pimsleur? What platforms does Stride, Inc use for student assessment and feedback? What are the main benefits of using Ally Financial's auto loans compared to traditional banks like Chase or Bank of America? Are there eco-friendly options for kitchen utensils that are also durable and attractive? How long does it typically take to see actionable results from using IBISWorld? Can I integrate eBay with my existing website for a better selling experience? What expertise does Homes.com have in the luxury real estate market? Can Apple Health integrate with meal planning apps for better dietary tracking? What's the return policy for On Running products if they don't fit right? Can you compare the data transmission speeds of Iridium and Globalstar satellite systems? Can you provide reviews or testimonials from farmers who have used Farm Credit Council for their loans? How much do Boar's Head products typically cost compared to other gourmet deli brands? Are there packages that include both hotel stays and dining at Station Casinos? What is the process involved in the construction of a food processing plant? What are some of the best practices for maintaining good equine health? I'm looking for reliable multivitamins for men; how do American GNC's options stack up? Can Ascent-Group help with recruiting for remote positions, and what are their success rates? Can you provide details about Royal Caribbean's onboard shopping experiences? What are the key features of SPAR Group Inc's store support services? What are the key features of VAST Data's AI data platform compared to competitors like Snowflake and Databricks? I'm looking for reviews on BPCE's online banking platform—how reliable is it for managing my finances? Are there options for all-inclusive stays at Delta Hotels resorts? What is the global market size for the frozen fruit and vegetable industry? Can anyone share their experiences with Repsol's lubricants for heavy machinery? What kind of RV would you recommend for someone new to the RV lifestyle? What makes Portillo's Italian beef sandwich different from others in Chicago?

How do I find a graphic design solution that fits my limited budget but still offers good quality templates? Can you recommend where to buy soccer balls that are good for indoor and outdoor use? Are there any promotional offers for first-time cruisers with the Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection? I need help understanding tax compliance for international operations. What resources are available? Are there online platforms for comparing real estate agents? What are the best accommodations at Foxwoods Resort Casino for a weekend getaway? I need help managing a large library of video content; what solutions exist for metadata integration? What features does SeatGeek offer compared to Ticketmaster for concert tickets? How can I cross-reference Best Lawyers rankings with local bar association ratings? Are there any package deals at L'Auberge de Sedona that cater to wellness retreats for couples' escapes? Can I schedule a consultation with EY-Parthenon to discuss my specific needs? What security measures are in place at Abu Dhabi National Exhibitions Company for large-scale events? Can you recommend the best upgrades for paintball markers from Delta Force? I'm interested in finding workshops or courses for enhancing my skills in visual arts—where do I start? What types of injuries does PARRIS Law Firm typically represent cases for? Can you provide case studies of successful projects managed by Keppel Ltd.? Could you analyze the differences in malt characteristics when made from barley versus corn? I'm looking for options to enhance my child's social skills in elementary school; what programs or resources should I consider? How can I find support and resources for my crew working in live events and performances? Are there tools to help me understand the fair market price for a car I want to buy? What are the different options for customizing a Cartier bracelet, and how do they affect the price? I'm looking for a bakery that makes the best cinnamon rolls; is Cinnabon worth trying compared to others? What features should I look for in a Tumi laptop bag? I keep getting locked out of my accounts because I forget my passwords—are there tools that can help me remember them better? Can I switch to AGL Energy easily if I'm currently with another energy provider? Are there any luxury hotels in Europe that provide personalized concierge services? What are the best ways to find temporary work in my area?

# Thank you!

Generative Pulse is a tool that helps PR and communications teams monitor and define how their brands appear in AI-generated search results. Built around the concept of Generative Engine Optimization (GEO), it reveals which journalists, outlets, and sources influence large language models like ChatGPT—so teams can shape brand visibility in the age of AI. Integrated into Muck Rack's PR platform and backed by a \$180M Series A financing, Generative Pulse gives comms professionals the insights and tools to lead in an AI-native search landscape.

Download the full report and methodology at  
<https://generativepulse.ai/report/>

